

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE GROUP

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COUNTRY Yugoslavia

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SUBJECT Volunteer Railroad Labor Battalions

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ORIGIN

SUPPLEMENT

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1. The Volunteer Railroad Work Battalions were organized in Yugoslavia to accomplish the following purposes:
 - a. to build and reconstruct railroad with cheap volunteer labor.
 - b. to indoctrinate volunteer workers (mostly youths) from all over the world in merits of Communism as practised in Yugoslavia.
 - c. to create a feeling of solidarity among youths from satellite countries and Leftists from the rest of the world.
2. Composition: During the summer of 1947, there were from 150,000 to 200,000 persons from 22 countries - mostly youths, students, etc.
3. Organization: Brigades of from 60 to over 100 persons of the same nationality are established. These are in turn broken down to groups of 10, each group with its own leader.
4. Finance: Each volunteer pays his own way to the Yugoslav frontier. From then on, the Yugoslav Government pays all bills, furnishes each worker with clothes and boots, and provides board and lodging. The work is thus unpaid, but foreign volunteers are rewarded by a one week trip to the seashore at the end of their work period (usually two months).
5. Program: "Regular" volunteers worked mornings (from about 04:00 to 12:00). In the afternoons, they pursued "cultural" activities (i.e. writing, painting, sports, political rallies, lectures, speeches, etc.). "Student" volunteers studied and pursued cultural activities in the morning and worked afternoons and evenings.
 - a. Brigades exceeding their work norms and fulfilling other conditions of education, cleanliness, etc., were designated as "Shock" or "Elite" Brigades.
 1. In the Bosnia area all of the satellite brigades were finally designated "Elite", whereas only two of the several Western brigades were so designated (namely Norway and Switzerland).
 - b. Workers were given comparative freedom to travel around and see the country when they were not working.

CLASSIFICATION

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- c. Very little heavy equipment was used. Most of the work was done by antiquated pick and shovel methods.
 - d. Work battalions were well supervised by secret police.
 - e. Many Yugoslavs joined battalions to get into the good graces of the government, having previously been Mihailovic Chetniks, and therefore black-balled for high education, etc.
6. The entire program accomplished a great part of its aim: to convince participants that the present form of government has drive, vitality, plan, and purpose; that conditions are not as bad as reported in the "capitalistic, plutocratic, fascistic press"; that Tito has large popular support; that there is religious freedom in Yugoslavia; that young Leftists of the world get along with each other regardless of racial, linguistic, and background differences.
 7. The Swiss Brigade was made up of 64 young Swiss and two American college girls. It was in Yugoslavia during July and August 1947.

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